Every Gardener Makes Mistakes

Justin Maltry, Garden Hotline Educator

It was the spring after I moved into a house with some friends. I was excited to finally have a garden, after living in apartments and yardless rowhouses for years. I had spent a few days on farms, and, like many of us, had grown up watching my parents garden. Finally! This was the first time I was given free rein to grow what I wanted.

Maritime Northwest Garden Guide in hand, my housemates and I excitedly put together a month-by-month plan with lists of what we were going to plant. We bought seeds and starts and moved soil into the new raised bed -- an old Ikea bedframe I proudly converted myself. It seems obvious now, though, that a bed frame coated in a chemical varnish was not the best choice for a vegetable garden bed -- an oversight that is cringe-worthy.

Luckily, most of the mistakes made by beginning gardeners are somewhere between harmless and educational -- like the time I was pretty sure I heard that too many flowers on a tomato plant were a problem, and removed all of them. Needless to say we had lots of green tomatoes that year.

But isn't that the great thing about gardens? In spite of our initial mistakes, the garden produces food. Nature is forgiving and educational, and you get to run exciting new experiments every year.

Save the World While Having Fun at Summer Camp

Mike Gervais, Children’s Program Coordinator

The barrage of bad news about the environment can be overwhelming enough for adults, let alone for children. Sometimes it can seem easier to tune out rather than do something to help. If this is the case, how can we help our children develop the passion that is necessary for them to become stewards of an increasingly complicated environmental situation?

The answer is simple--more positive interactions with the environment. The more good experiences children have learning about the outdoors, the more likely they’ll feel empowered to make positive change.

An urban garden is an ideal place for children to become connected to the outdoors and to develop a sense of stewardship for the environment. In a typical week of Seattle Tilth summer camp, children work together to nurture veggies, prepare meals, sing songs, play games, study insects, marvel at worms and examine compost.

This summer debuts several new camps including “Micro Worlds,” where campers 6-10 years old can zoom in on the details of insects and plants to learn how they function. “Ancient Skills, Wild Plants” is a great way to engage middle school students in nature. The popular camp, “UFF! Urban Farmers of the Future,” is happening at Rainier Beach Urban Farm and Wetlands, where campers participate in harvesting, observing chickens and exploring the wetlands. There are several more camps to choose from for ages 2-14.

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Take Action for What You Believe In

Andrea Platt Dwyer, Executive Director

Activist. What kind of image does that word conjure up for you? For me, it’s my mother. Now a spry nonagenarian, my mom was a stay-at-home mother of seven who taught me much about activism, citizen engagement and the importance of embracing responsibility to create the kind of world I want to live in.

When I was young, we lived in a medium-sized town in Ohio where the urban amenities were plentiful, one of which was our nearby natural history museum. In those days, the city could afford to offer a lot of free services during the summer, and many families took full advantage of the opportunity by sending their school-aged kids off to classes at the museum. We lived close enough that we could walk or ride our bikes to get there, but the busy road leading up to the museum had no sidewalks, creating a treacherous situation for anyone not in a car. My mother went to work. She petitioned the city council, talked to the mayor, testified and gathered signatures. Soon enough we had a new bike and walking path installed by the city leading right to the front door of the museum. Needless to say, I was impressed.

There are many other examples of my mother going to bat for what she believed in. Over time, I came to realize that the most valuable lesson I learned from her is that it matters what we do as individuals. One person composting might not seem like much, but magnify that by thousands and we can keep a lot of food waste out of the landfill. One person saving seeds, one person shopping at a farmers market, one person growing lettuce on a balcony – when multiplied by many, that action becomes a movement.

Today, I channel my inner activist into Seattle Tilth’s work to create a more equitable and sustainable food system. I am grateful to know that there are so many of you working right alongside me, and for my great fortune at having a mother who believed in the power of personal action.

EVERY GARDENER MAKES MISTAKES  Continued from page 1

after enough of those educational moments, the experiments pay off and you end up with more tomatoes than you can eat. Then you learn how to can them so you can eat salsa with your own tomatoes in January! It’s empowering to supply yourself with food, especially when that food would otherwise be pricey and come from thousands of miles away.

That’s the feeling that got me hooked, the blank slate of a garden in the spring with the promise of growth, bees, harvest and food. There is a sense of awe in seeing your produce, the interplay of your energy with the sun, soil and seeds. Soon, you start planning your garden months ahead, browsing seed catalogs when it’s 40 degrees F and drizzling outside, noticing every odd spot in the yard (or neighborhood) and imagining how many beets could fit there.

It’s easy to be intimidated by all the plants, diseases, fertilizers and other considerations for your garden. But you have a powerful ally: the plants themselves. Remember that regardless of what you do, plants want to grow. So don’t be afraid to try to help them along. Start small by planting some of your favorite easy-to-grow greens and herbs, and don’t be afraid to take your lumps -- it’s how growth, bees, harvest and food. There is a sense of awe in seeing your produce, the interplay of your energy with the sun, soil and seeds. Soon, you start planning your garden months ahead, browsing seed catalogs when it’s 40 degrees F and drizzling outside, noticing every odd spot in the yard (or neighborhood) and imagining how many beets could fit there.

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To learn more about getting your garden started, take one of our classes, check out our books or contact the Garden Hotline at (206) 633-0224 or gardenhotline.org. You can also find us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

HAVING FUN AT SUMMER CAMP  Continued from page 1

Our summer camps place children directly in a community of learners that are actively working toward a more sustainable future, and having a blast while we’re at it. Take a look at our summer camps on our website and sign up your kids for summer fun with Seattle Tilth!

The mission of Seattle Tilth is to inspire and educate people to safeguard our natural resources while building an equitable and sustainable local food system.
It's our favorite time of year—planting season! We invite you to attend our May Edible Plant Sale on May 3-4 in Wallingford for the best edible plant selection around. Choose from over 460 varieties of organically or sustainably grown vegetable, herb and flower plant starts, plus fruit trees and shrubs, to help you grow an abundant garden bursting with diverse vegetables.

Grow More
Think outside the box! Here are some ideas to increase your harvest and enjoyment:

• **Experiment.** Along with your favorite plants, try branching out with exciting new varieties, like Walking Stick kale, Purple Peacock broccoli and ginger mint.
• **Maximize your garden space by growing vertically.** Consider growing Tromboncino squash, Lemon cucumbers and Lil’ Pump-Ke-Mon pumpkins on trellises. Watch them climb up, up and away!
• **Heat up with a cloche!** Make your hot season crops happy using a cloche to protect your plants and heat up your beds. Purple Erdine eggplant, Hot Paper Lantern Habanero peppers and Thai basil are examples of plant varieties that will love the extra heat.
• **Harden-off all plants a few days before planting.** Set your plants outside during the day and bring them in at night to ease the transition from the greenhouse to your garden and prevent transplant shock, which slows growth.

Get a Garden to Go
Are you a new gardener and don’t quite know where to start? Leave your selections up to us by reserving Gardens To Go, curated plant trays focused on themes: Container Gardening, Edible Plants for Kids, Summer Hits and Gardening 101. Reserve Gardens to Go online before the sale, or purchase them during the sale -- stop by the G2G booth in the lower field of the sale for quick pickup.
Garden Guide Gets Revamped

Liza Burke, Communications Director

Our Maritime Northwest Garden Guide has been a trusted resource for gardeners in the Maritime Northwest climate since 1998. Some call it the gardener’s bible. Ciscoe Morris, Seattle’s beloved gardening celebrity calls it, “The perfect guide to make anyone a great organic gardener in the Pacific Northwest.”

You are familiar with it, right? It’s a month-by-month gardening calendar, outlining when to plant vegetables, herbs and flowers and supplemented with basic principles and techniques important to organic gardening. It’s the type of book you take with you outside into the garden and refer to constantly. In sixteen years we’ve sold over 68,000 copies.

We are thrilled to announce the completely revised, remodeled and updated second edition! And we want our newsletter readers to know before we announce it widely.

What’s New?

It is still a practical planting guide with monthly sowing calendars, gardening techniques and resources. We’ve added some other handy features to assist the year-round vegetable gardener:

- Garden Almanacs that include a quick list of chores and plants that can be harvested each month
- Year-at-a-Glance planting calendars
- Updated vegetable variety lists and resources
- An index
- New illustrations and book design
- Recent trends in urban agriculture

What are the New Topics for Garden Geeks?

- Garden planning and design
- Fall and winter gardening
- Perennial vegetables
- Growing shade-loving plants and flowers that attract beneficial insects

It’s TWICE the size! Our whole community has had a hand in the development of this book and we thank you all. Special thanks to the original team that created such a brilliant resource – Carl Elliot, Rob Peterson, Kathryn True and Robin Rose. Pick up a shiny new copy at our May Edible Plant Sale, in our office or on our website in May.

Supporting Local Family Farmers

Chris Iberle, Food Hub Manager

Factory farming is damaging our planet, hurting farmers and making us sick. We have a long road ahead to reclaim our food system so that it produces food in a way that respects our planet and people. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a model that allows members to help keep farmers in business and dollars in our local economy, while providing delicious, seasonal produce straight from the farm. Then our environment can begin healing. Win-win-win!

CSAs started as a way for eaters to support and reconnect to farmers and the land directly. They started in the 1960s in Germany, Switzerland and Japan, as a response to concerns over food safety and loss of farmland. The first CSA in the US started in the 1980s and, according to the USDA’s National Agriculture Library, the movement now includes over 12,500 CSA farms.

You can participate in the movement and support new, immigrant and limited resource farmers by joining Seattle Tilth’s CSA! Farmers in our educational programs gain valuable experience by selling their produce through the Seattle Tilth CSA, even if they lack the knowledge or crop diversity to run a CSA independently. Our CSA supports 24 new farmers this year and brings you 20 weeks of local, farm fresh and ecologically grown produce (transitioning to organic). You can sign up for a CSA share and pay online, along with tasty add-on options: fresh eggs, chicken, pork, honey, legumes and more.
May We Plant Now, April?

Falaah Jones, Eastside Programs Coordinator

Late spring can slam us with cold and rainy days. Balmy days might lull us into thinking that it is time to put heat lovers out into the garden. Resist that urge! There are so many other things to do in the garden in April and May.

- Slugs abound in April. Squish, trap and hunt them down!
- Plant out cabbage, lettuce, kale and chard seedlings or sow seeds directly into the garden for a succession of greens.
- Think companion plants -- sowing carrots with radishes for a prudent use of space or carrots with leek starts to deter the carrot rust fly.
- Plant more peas and get your potatoes in the ground.
- Sow squash and melons under a cloche.

For a complete list of “what to plant when” buy the NEWLY REVISED Maritime Northwest Garden Guide in May (see article page 4)!

• Come to our May Edible Plant Sale on May 3-4 for a plant extravaganza.

Go Deep

Carey Thornton, Adult Education Coordinator

Invest in your food system by learning how to grow and preserve food, then teach others your new skills. Seattle Tilth offers intensive courses for you to gain a deep understanding of topics and opportunity to practice through extensive hands-on learning. In our ongoing courses, you also develop better connections with your classmates and instructors, creating a more lasting integration of the topics.

The Comprehensive Organic Gardener Course is our most popular course, offered multiple times a year. This three-week intensive is appropriate for beginner to intermediate gardeners and combines evening lectures with all-day, hands-on workshops. It is called comprehensive for good reason because the course covers all the fundamentals of organic gardening, including how to build healthy soil and plan for the garden cycles from starting seeds to saving them and everything in between.

Before the summer officially starts, while your fruits and veggies are just starting to realize their potential, learn how to preserve them at Seattle Tilth’s Food Preservation Certification course. This unique course covers everything you need to know to safely can, pickle, dry, freeze and otherwise preserve the fruits of your labor (and garden), so you can continue to eat seasonally throughout the year. Learn food safety and the science behind these techniques so you can feel confident sharing your preservation skills with others in your community.

If you garden at a school or community garden and plan to teach others (especially little ones) you may be interested in the Garden Educator Workshop: Summer Intensive. This week-long intensive allows educators to immerse themselves in the organic garden classroom. Invest in the sustainability of your school garden program by exploring Seattle Tilth’s children’s garden with our garden education experts. Find details on page 8 or at seattletilth.org.

Karla Farias (center) of Feliz Farms, a third generation farmer from Mexico, is part of Seattle Tilth Farm Works, producing pork for our CSA this year. See article, page 4.
Garden To Table: Gettin’ Saucy with Rhubarb

Leika Suzumura, Community Kitchens Northwest Program Manager

Many people only know rhubarb to have one friend, the sweet strawberry, cuddled up together in a pie or crisp. In fact, rhubarb is a distinctive flavor that makes a tasty companion to many other denizens of the garden. In this article, we will cross the globe with two simple sauces that can be made using rhubarb. “Salsa,” the Spanish word for sauce, brings to rhubarb the flare of Mexican tradition, while the gingery chutney leads us through the spice route into India.

Rhubarb Salsa
Yields 3 cups

Ingredients
2 cups rhubarb, chopped
1 medium apple, chopped
3 green onions, chopped
2 limes, juiced
2 tablespoons honey
1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and finely chopped
½ teaspoon salt

Instructions
• Blanch rhubarb in a pot of boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain and cool under running cold water.
• In a bowl, combine cooled rhubarb with apple, green onion, lime juice, honey, jalapeno pepper and salt. Taste and add salt, lime or honey as needed for balanced flavor.
• Serve immediately. Refrigerate in an air tight container for up to five days.

Ginger Rhubarb Chutney
Yields 3 cups

Ingredients
1 cup brown sugar, packed
½ cup apple cider vinegar
1lb rhubarb, trimmed & sliced ½” thick
½ cup raisins
Juice of one orange
¼ cup finely chopped crystallized ginger
2 teaspoon fresh ginger, grated
1 shallot, finely chopped
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
½ teaspoon coriander
Dash of ground black pepper
Zest of one orange

Instructions
• Place brown sugar and vinegar in a sauce pan on medium heat. Bring to a simmer until sugar is dissolved.
• Add the rest of the ingredients to the pan and combine evenly over medium low heat. Stirring occasionally, cook until rhubarb becomes tender and the liquid becomes like syrup, about 1 hour.
• Turn off heat and mix in the orange zest.
• Cool and serve, or store in an air tight container for up to 5 days.

Make a BIG Impact

Mark your calendar for Tuesday, May 6! It’s GiveBIG, the one day a year when your gift will be MATCHED TWICE – first by the Seattle Foundation, and second by a generous group of Seattle Tilth donors.

Here’s just a few of the impacts your gift will make in 2014:
• Help more than 30 new and disadvantaged farmers start small farm businesses
• Launch a second site for Seattle Youth Garden Works in South Seattle and increase our outreach to 75 youth
• Build 50 gardens for low-income families and communities
• Prepare and provide more than 10,000 healthy meals to low-income area
• Deliver 2,500 bags of healthy, local food to families in need
• Teach over 10,000 young people to be environmental stewards

Increase the impact of your gift and donate during GiveBIG! Please visit seattlefoundation.org on May 6 and search for Seattle Tilth.

Grow a Little More

Lisa Taylor, Children’s Education Program Manager

What could you grow in four square feet? Vegetables and herbs don’t need much space; they just need sun, plenty of water and care. If you think you don’t have room to grow fresh produce, look again. Any empty spot that is 2x2’ and gets 6-8 hours of sun can be a good place to grow. You can plant in the ground or in a large container.

If you had just 4 square feet you could grow: 5 big heads of lettuce, 1-2 tomatoes or 3 kale plants. Build a trellis and you could grow a climbing tromboncino squash, 2 cucumber plants or a clutch of pole bean plants. Culinary herbs such as parsley, cilantro and rosemary also grow well in small spaces. Carefully time plantings and you could grow baby salad greens in spring, tomatoes through the summer and radishes in fall.

If all of our small, unused spaces were planted, imagine the amount of food we could grow! On the 40 balconies of an apartment building we could grow 200 heads of lettuce, 400 pounds of tomatoes or 150 pounds of basil. That’s a lot of food! Put your small spaces to work this season for big results.

See our class list on page 8 (or visit our website) for classes to help you grow more food this year.
Hot Questions from the Garden Hotline

Sue Hartman, Garden Hotline Educator

Q. What is the difference between organic and synthetic fertilizer?

A. “Organic” in fertilizers refers to the quality of the matter contained within, which comes from an animal, vegetative or plant source. Because these ingredients naturally occur, they tend to decompose or disperse at a gradual pace. As a result, their N-P-K numbers (the three numbers you see on every fertilizer, indicating Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Potassium percentages) appear much lower than those of synthetic fertilizers. Since they slowly release this low dosage over a long period of time, plants develop healthier, sturdier growth. These nutrients will remain in the soil so a plant can take up more of them at the pace it prefers, leaving less fertilizer leftover to leach into our waterways. It’s important to note that organic fertilizer doesn’t necessarily mean you’re buying something that is pesticide-free.

Synthetic fertilizers, on the other hand, are human made and usually involve very concentrated amounts of nutrients that are water soluble, meaning they will be taken up by the plant quickly and also promptly wash out of the soil. This can lead to “fertilizer burn,” where a plant is physically damaged by a high dosage of macronutrients, or a plant that grows too much to sustain its growth. These nutrients will remain in the soil so a plant can take up more of them at the pace it prefers, leaving less fertilizer leftover to leach into our waterways. It’s important to note that organic fertilizer doesn’t necessarily mean you’re buying something that is pesticide-free.

Sound is ailing from phosphorus overdosing, regardless of whether we’re using organic or synthetic fertilizers, it is extremely important that we only use as much fertilizer as is necessary.

King County residents qualify for five free soil tests per year through King Conservation District, so get your soil mailed off soon! Find out more at kingcd.org.

Q. How do I make sure I’m not over-fertilizing my plants?

A. Talk to your soil! Soil testing regularly (late fall or early spring is best) will help you determine your baseline numbers so you can know exactly what your plants may require. Seeing that Puget...
Learn, Grow, Take a Class!

Three prices are listed for each class: for the general public, for Seattle Tilth members and for two members of a household taking the class together. For example: $45 (non-member)/$35 (member)/$68 (household). Become a member through our website or use the form on page 7. Advanced registration and payment are required for classes. Class details and registration information are found on our website under the “Learn” tab or by scanning the QR code. Questions? Call (206) 633-0451 ext. 101.

Class venue:
GSC: Good Shepherd Center, 4649 Sunnyside Ave N, Seattle
BGP: Bradner Gardens Park, 1730 Bradner Place S, Seattle

Veggie Gardening

Grow Edible Perennials: Vegetables, $36/25/54
Wednesday, April 2, 6-8 p.m., BGP

Get Your Garden Growing, $36/25/54
Saturday, April 5, 2-4 p.m., BGP
Thursday, May 1, 6-8 p.m., GSC

Comprehensive Organic Gardener, $275/$235
Wednesdays, April 9-30, 7-9 p.m., BGP

Container Gardening 101, $36/25/54
Thursday, April 10, 6-8 p.m., GSC
Saturday, May 10, 2-4 p.m., BGP

Organic Gardening 101, $55/46/90
TWO Thursdays, April 17 & 24, 6-8 p.m., GSC
Saturday, May 10, 1-5 p.m., GSC

Some Like it Hot: Grow Great Tomatoes, $36/25/54
Saturday, May 10, 10-noon, BGP
Thursday, May 22, 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC

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Saturday, May 10, 10-noon, BGP
Thursday, May 22, 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC

Urban Livestock

Raise City Goats, $36/25/54
Saturday, April 19, 10 a.m.-noon, private residence in Madrona

Poultry Health Basics, $36/25/54
Wednesday, April 30, 6:30-8:30 p.m., GSC

City Chickens 101, $36/25/54
Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m.-noon, GSC

Kitchen Classes

Urban Weeds and Wild Foods-Part 1: Identify and Harvest, $36/25/54
Saturday, April 26, noon-2 p.m., GSC

Urban Weeds and Wild Foods-Part 2: Preparing for Your Table, $36/25/54
Saturday, April 26, 2-4 p.m., GSC

Food Preservation Certification Course: May 31-June 28, $400/350
Saturday, May 31, 9 a.m.-4 p.m., GSC

Permaculture & Sustainable Landscapes

Grow Your Own Flowers, $36/25/54
Saturday, April 12, 2-4 p.m., GSC

Spring Into Bed

Join Just Garden, our program that builds gardens for low income families.

Crown Hill neighborhood in North Seattle
Saturday, May 17

For more information or to volunteer contact: justgarden@seattletilth.org.